

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEL AV 04645 061843Z
ACTION NODS-00

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2425
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
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S E C R E T TEL AVIV 4645

EXDIS - DIST AS NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, IS, EG, XF
SUBJECT: BEGIN'S IMPRESSIONS OF SADAT AND CURRENT MOOD

REF: A) STATE 87733; B) CAIRO 10072

1. WHILE SITTING NEXT TO BEGIN TODAY, APRIL 6, AT LUNCHEON ON BOARD THE USS NIMITZ, WE GOT ON TO THE SUBJECT OF SADAT AGAIN. I TRIED TO CONVEY SOME OF HERMANN EILTS' INSIGHTS INTO SADAT'S MODE OF OPERATIONS, AS SUGGESTED IN REF A. HE AGREED THAT SADAT'S OVERALL POSITIONS HAVE BEEN REMARKABLY CONSISTENT, "INDEED TOTALLY RIGID" TO QUOTE BEGIN. OTHERWISE I MADE LITTLE HEADWAY.
2. ALTHOUGH THIS IS AN EFFORT WORTH REPEATING FROM TIME TO TIME, AND PROBABLY MORE USEFUL WITH OTHERS THAN WITH BEGIN HIMSELF, I VERY MUCH DOUBT THAT ANY INTERPRETATIONS WE WILL GIVE OF SADAT'S BEHAVIOR WILL CARRY MUCH REAL WEIGHT WITH BEGIN NOW THAT HE HAS HAD A GOOD DEAL OF PERSONAL EXPOSURE TO HIM AND HAS A BASIS ON WHICH TO DRAW HIS OWN CONCLUSIONS, ERRONEOUS THOUGH THEY MAY WELL BE.

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3. WE GOT OFF AGAIN ON THE QUESTION OF WHETHER SADAT IS DEMANDING "TOTAL WITHDRAWAL." I ARGUED ALONG THE LINES OF PARA SEVEN OF REF B, QUOTING WHAT WEIZMAN HAD TOLD ME HAD BEEN SADAT'S STATEMENTS AS HE HAD UNDERSTOOD THEM. BEGIN COUNTERED WITH WHAT HE SAID WAS BARAK'S VIEW--WHICH HE SAID TOTALLY AGREED WITH HIS INTERPRETATION; I.E., THAT SADAT IS INSISTING ON A DECLARATION OF INTENT

TO WITHDRAW TOTALLY, AFTER WHICH HE WOULD THEN BE PREPARED FOR NEGOTIATIONS ABOUT SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS. I SUGGESTED THAT PERHAPS SADAT LOOKS ON THE DECLARATION MORE AS A "POLITICAL DOCUMENT" THAN A LEGAL CONTRACT. BEGIN SAID HE COULD NOT ACCEPT THAT CONCEPT. IF ISRAEL WERE TO SIGN A DECLARATION PROMISING "TOTAL WITHDRAWAL," IT WOULD HAVE TO HONOR IT. AND THAT, HE SAID, NEITHER HE NOR ANY ISRAELI GOVERNMENT WOULD EVER DO.

4. BEGIN ALSO DURING THE CONVERSATION CALLED MY ATTENTION TO THE LATEST PUBLIC OPINION POLL CARRIED THIS MORNING IN HA'ARETZ (CONDUCTED BY THE PORI ORGANIZATION). THE POLL FINDS 56 PERCENT OF THE PUBILC "BELIEVING THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT IS DOING ALL IT CAN TO OBTAIN PEACE," PLUS ANOTHER 16.2 PERCENT WHO BELIEVE THE GOVERNMENT IS "MORE OR LESS DOING ALL IT CAN." BEGIN SAID THIS DEMONSTRATED THE BREADTH OF DOMESTIC SUPPORT FOR HIS POSITIONS. HE ALSO SAID HE WAS RECEIVING "HUNDREDS AND HUNDREDS OF LETTERS AND TELEGRAMS," BOTH FROM WITHIN ISRAEL AND FROM THE UNITED STATES, URGING HIM TO "STAND FIRM." ALL OF THIS SEEMED CLEARLY TO REINFORCE HIS CONVICTION THAT IT WAS SADAT WHO SHOULD MAKE THE NEXT MOVE, AND THAT HIS POLICY IS NOT ONLY RIGHT BUT ALSO POPULAR.
LEWIS

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NNN

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